REMARKS

The Applicants sincerely appreciate the thorough examination of the present application as evidenced by the Office Action of March 26, 2009 (the Office Action). In particular, the Applicants appreciate the withdrawal of all rejections from the previous Office Actions of November 5, 2008, May 20, 2008, November 15, 2007, and April 2, 2007. By this amendment, the Applicants have amended independent Claims 1 and 11 to provide clarification thereof, and added new Claims 21 and 22. In addition, dependent claims have been amended to provide consistency with the amended dependent claims. The claim amendments presented herein (and presented in earlier filings) have been made to advance prosecution of the present application without prejudice to the Applicants' right to pursue amended and/or canceled claims in one or more continuing applications.

In the following remarks, the Applicants will show that all claims are patentable over the cited art. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested in due course.

Independent Claims 1 and 11 Are Patentable

The Office Action has rejected independent Claims 1 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. Sec. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Pub.No. 2003/0037261 to Meffert et al. (Meffert) in view of European Pub.No. EP 1,016,972 to Nagai (Nagai). The Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Claims 1 and 11 are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons discussed below.

Claim 1, for example, recites a system for providing email communications, the system comprising:

a memory;
a processor coupled to the memory and configured to execute an e-mail client application, which includes:
message composition logic operable to present a write e-mail window including a message editor pane to a user and to compose an e-mail text message to at least one recipient responsive to accepting entry of text of a body of the e-mail text message in a text format into the message editor pane wherein entry of the text is accepted from the user;
write protect logic operable to protect the e-mail text message against subsequent alteration by the at least one recipient, wherein the write protect logic is configured to,

accept a user choice whether to write protect the e-mail text message,

responsive to the user choosing to write protect the e-mail text message, enable the write protect logic through conversion of a format of the text in the body of the e-mail text message from the text format to a picture format protected against subsequent alterations, and send the e-mail text message to the at least one recipient after conversion of the format of the text from the text format to the picture format protected against subsequent alterations, and

responsive to the user choosing not to write protect the e-mail text message, send the e-mail text message to the at least one recipient in the text format without conversion to the picture format.

Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that a user may choose whether to write protect an e-mail text message. In addition, Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the e-mail text message is sent in the (write protected) picture format responsive to the user choosing to write protect the e-mail text message, and that the e-mail text message is sent in the (unprotected) text format (without conversion to the picture format) responsive to the user choosing not to write protect the e-mail text message.

Meffert discusses "secured content delivery between a sender and a recipient in an electronic network using PKI-based encryption." Meffert, Abstract. The Office Action concedes that: "Meffert fails to teach converting the text into a picture format." Office Action, page 3. In support of the rejection of Claim 1, the Office Action states that:

Nagai teaches composing and email message and converting the message from text to an image [0034]. Nagai teaches the conversion takes place at the client prior to being sent to a recipient [0034]. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use the graphical conversion of Nagai with the security of Meffert because it allows viewing without specific fonts.

Office Action, page 3.

Nagai discusses a "bottle mail system" (see, Nagai, page 6, line 40 to page 7, line 20) that enables "unpredictable communication" (see, Nagai, col. 16, line 58) with "no specified destination" (see, Nagai, Title) where a client "receives a mail selected at random among those stored in the mailbox 30" (see, Nagai, Abstract). Moreover, portions of Nagai by the Office Action state that:

[0034] A user who wants to write a mail may type in any character strings ... as he/she likes in a mail composition screen.... The input data are converted into image data of BMP format.... This data conversion into the BMP format is made so as to avoid possible errors in displaying text data....

[0036] Subsequently, a new mail is created based on the above converted image data....

Nagai, col. 8, lines 7-26. Nagai, however, fails to teach or suggest accepting a user choice whether to write protect an e-mail text message, much less sending the e-mail text message after conversion of text to a picture format responsive to the user choosing to write protect the e-mail text message and sending the e-mail text message in the text format without conversion to the picture format responsive to the user choosing not to write protect the e-mail text message. As neither Meffert nor Nagai, taken alone or in combination, teaches or suggests accepting a user choice whether to write protect an e-mail text message in a picture format, the Applicants respectfully submit that the combination thereof fails to teach or suggest all elements of Claim 1.

The Applicants further submit that it would not be predictable to selectively combine elements of the diverse systems of Meffert and Nagai that are directed to substantially different and even opposite purposes. As noted above, Meffert discusses "secured content delivery between a sender and a recipient in an electronic network using PKI-based encryption." Meffert, Abstract. As further discussed in Meffert, "PKI is a ... standard that uses ... encryption and digital certificate to achieve secure Internet services" (Meffert, paragraph [0007]), and the sender or creator of content is permitted to "control the dissemination of that content even after it has been delivered to intended recipients" (Meffert, paragraph [0091]). In contrast, the "bottle mail system" of Nagai enables "unpredictable communication" (see, Nagai, col. 16, line 58) with "no specified destination" (see, Nagai, Title) where a client "receives a mail selected at random among those stored in the mailbox 30" (see, Nagai, Abstract). The unpredictable and random communications of Nagai with no specified destination are thus the opposite of the secured content delivery of Meffert with intended recipients. Accordingly, it is only hindsight knowledge of Claim 1 that may potentially compel someone to combine Meffert and Nagai.

For at least the reasons discussed above, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 1 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, the Applicants submit that Claim 11 is patentable for reasons similar to those discussed above with respect to Claim 1. Moreover, dependent Claims 3-10, 12-15, and 17-22 are patentable at least as per the patentability of Claims 1 and 11 from which they depend.

New Claims 21 and 22 Are Separately Patentable

New Claim 21 and 22 are patentable at least as per the patentability of Claims 1 and 11 from which they depend. Claims 21 and 22 are also separately patentable. For example, Claim 21 recites write protect logic configured to send a first e-mail text in a picture format and to send a second e-mail text message in a text format (without conversion to the picture format) responsive to different user choices. Neither Meffert nor Nagai, taken alone or in combination, teaches or suggests write protect logic providing user choice of a text or image format as recited in Claim 21. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 21 and 22 are separately patentable.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the Applicants submit that all pending claims in the present application are in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested in due course. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney by telephone should any additional issues need to be addressed.
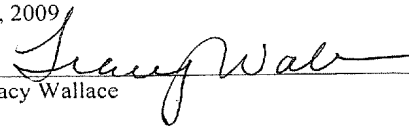
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